CLAIMS

1. A system, comprising:

a speech animation engine; and

a client application in communication with the speech animation engine,

5   wherein the client application is operable to perform the following operations:

sending a request for speech animation to the speech animation engine, the request identifying data to be used to generate the speech animation, the speech animation being speech synchronized with facial expressions;

receiving a response from the speech animation engine, the response

10   identifying the generated speech animation; and

using the generated speech animation to animate a talking agent displayed on a user interface of the client application;

and wherein the speech animation engine is operable to perform the following operations:

15   receiving the request for speech animation from the client application;

retrieving the data identified in the request without user intervention;

generating the speech animation using the retrieved data; and

sending the response identifying the generated speech animation to the client application.

20   2. The system of claim 1, wherein retrieving the data includes retrieving the data in real time.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the data specifies text to be used to generate the speech animation.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein the text includes variable elements.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the data specifies a voice to be used to generate the speech

25   animation.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein the data specifies a pool of synonyms; and generating the speech animation includes selecting a synonym from the pool of synonyms.

7. The system of claim 1, wherein the request further identifies context information taken from a live session of the client application; and

5   generating the speech animation includes incorporating the context information into the generated speech animation.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the context information includes information about a user of the client application.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein:

10   the client application is a web application; and

         the request is an HTTP request.

10. A computer program product, tangibly embodied in an information carrier, the computer program product being operable to cause data processing apparatus to perform operations comprising:

15   receiving a request from a client application for speech animation, the request identifying data to be used to generate the speech animation, the speech animation being speech synchronized with facial expressions;

         retrieving the data without user intervention;

         generating the speech animation using the retrieved data; and

20   sending a response identifying the generated speech animation to the client application.

11. The product of claim 10, wherein retrieving the data includes retrieving the data in real time.

12. The product of claim 10, wherein the data specifies text to be used to generate the speech

25 animation.

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13. The product of claim 12, wherein the text includes variable elements.

14. The product of claim 10, wherein the data specifies a voice to be used to generate the speech animation.

15. The product of claim 10, wherein the data specifies a pool of synonyms; and generating the speech animation includes selecting a synonym from the pool of synonyms.

16. The product of claim 10, wherein the request further identifies context information taken from a live session of the client application; and

generating the speech animation includes incorporating the context information into the generated speech animation.

17. The product of claim 16, wherein the context information includes information about a user of the client application.

18. The product of claim 10, wherein:

the client application is a web application; and

the request is an HTTP request.